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NIC-02939/88
19 August 1988

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

VIA: National Intelligence Officer for Warning

FROM: [REDACTED]
Assistant National Intelligence Officer for USSR

SUBJECT: August Warning and Forecast Report

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1. Withdrawal from Afghanistan: Status and Outlook

A. Discussion

There was community consensus with a DIA presentation which concluded that the Soviet withdrawal is about half complete. We are sure that some 40,000 troops have left and know that many thousand more have also gone, although we cannot provide more precise numbers.

We anticipate a lull in the rate of withdrawals between now and the end of October, then the beginning of another large exodus. We think the lull will be designed to improve the prospects that the Soviet client regime will survive to the end of the withdrawal period and increase frictions among the resistance.

We do not expect much combat activity by Soviet ground forces beyond that related to securing withdrawal routes, but we do anticipate the heavy use of air power in Afghanistan and against targets in Pakistan. Thus far, the Soviets have withdrawn only about 10% of their fixed-wing air assets.

Nothing the community as seen thus far has changed its assessment about the poor survival prospects of the Kabul regime. We do anticipate more political surprises as the regime tries to increase its chances of surviving the withdrawal, however.

We discussed the hypothesis that Gorbachev's withdrawal decision was controversial and consequently reversible and found no community support for it. The community believes that the Soviets anticipate losing a major city before the end of the withdrawal period and are prepared for the prospect that the Kabul regime will not long survive after they are gone. It also believes that the leadership was in agreement about the decision to withdraw and that the decision is irreversible.

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2. Implications for Moscow of an Iran-Iraq Ceasefire

A. Discussion:

There was community agreement with a State/INR presentation that the ceasefire presents both problems and opportunities for Moscow, assuming that it holds.

The Soviet offer to mediate suggests that the Soviets want the ceasefire to hold and will try to discourage Iraq from pursuing the war into Iran, although Soviet efforts probably would be unavailing.

The main benefit, from Moscow's point of view, is that the ceasefire will doubtless lead to a drawdown in the Western naval presence in the region. In addition, the Soviets probably calculate that Persian Gulf states will be less willing to cooperate with the US on security issues and they may approve a further upgrading of their ties with the USSR. We also expect Bahrain and Saudi Arabia to establish diplomatic relations with the USSR. Moscow's willingness to sell arms will be a continuing asset in its courtship of the Gulf states and Iraq and Iran.

All analysts agree that an end to the war will accelerate Iraq's tilt toward the West. Moreover, both Iran and Iraq are likely to turn to the West to secure economic assistance for reconstruction. Some analysts think that because of continuing Soviet-Iranian differences over Afghanistan and Iranian efforts to subvert Soviet Muslims, Moscow's prospects for improving its position in Iran will be limited. Others, however, believe that Moscow may make some gains because it will move quickly to resume arms sales to Iran and work on the old economic aid projects that were halted when Iraq's air war against Iran intensified in the mid-1980s.

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3. Pressures for Change in Foreign Policy

A. Discussion

Community representatives engaged in a preliminary assessment of several recent developments that suggest there are growing pressures for change in Soviet approaches to East-West relations under Gorbachev--including the recent expansion of glasnost in foreign policy, criticism of some Brezhnev and Stalin-era policies, the

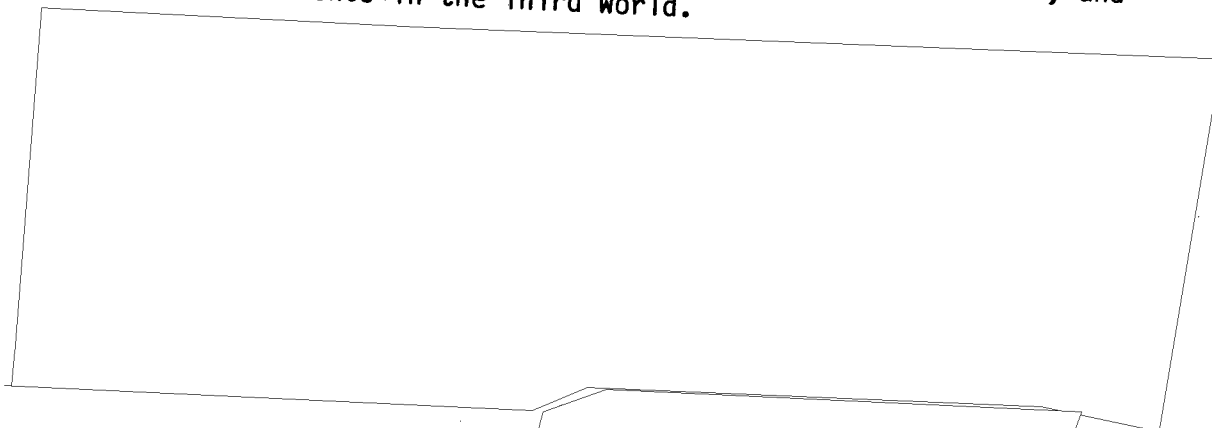
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apparent sparring over the continuing relevance of "class struggle" among Politburo members Shevardnadze, Yakovlev, and Ligachev, and proposals to subordinate national security decisions to more effective oversight from an invigorated Soviet legislature. Although there are continuing differences within the community over the impact of these developments on the Soviet military, the community is in substantial agreement on some key judgments about the origins and the impact of this foreign policy ferment:

WHAT IS GORBACHEV'S AGENDA? Gorbachev is dissatisfied with the traditional foreign policy approaches he inherited, eager to move in new, more flexible directions, and frustrated with the resistance he is encountering. By sanctioning a critical reassessment of traditional policies and a more open debate about alternatives, he hopes to discredit his opponents and increase his ability to embark on some major departures from past approaches to East-West relations. Although we can not be certain of the specific changes Gorbachev seeks, his objective is a further reduction of tensions with the West that will allow him to constrain military spending and concentrate resources on his domestic rebuilding program. The new, more flexible statements on East-West relations (such as the decline of "class struggle") by Gorbachev and his allies serve a clear propaganda purpose--helping to undermine what Gorbachev has called the USSR's "enemy image" in the West. But they also support an effort at home to redefine the foreign threat in less alarming terms.

POLITICAL AND POLICY IMPACT. The critical assessment of past foreign policy approaches and the effort to redefine key ideological tenets that underline strategy toward the West could work to consolidate and accelerate changes in Soviet approaches to East-West relations, arms control, and the Third World. At this point, however, these new directions are still subject to debate in the Politburo, to say nothing of the party at large, and the outcome is far from clear. Ligachev and other more conservative members of the leadership appear to have supported some potentially controversial decisions already taken--such as the troop withdrawal from Afghanistan--but the current debate suggests that they are resisting further steps. Ligachev's reaffirmation of the "class character" of international relations suggests that he may be concerned in particular about a weakening of Soviet support for communist parties, revolutionary movements, and traditional clients in the Third World.



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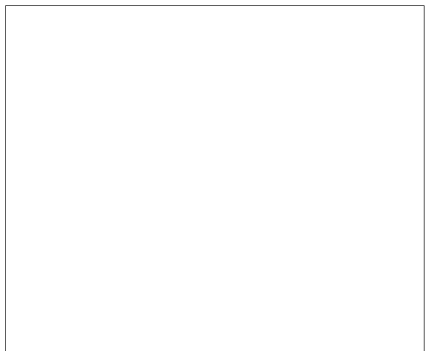
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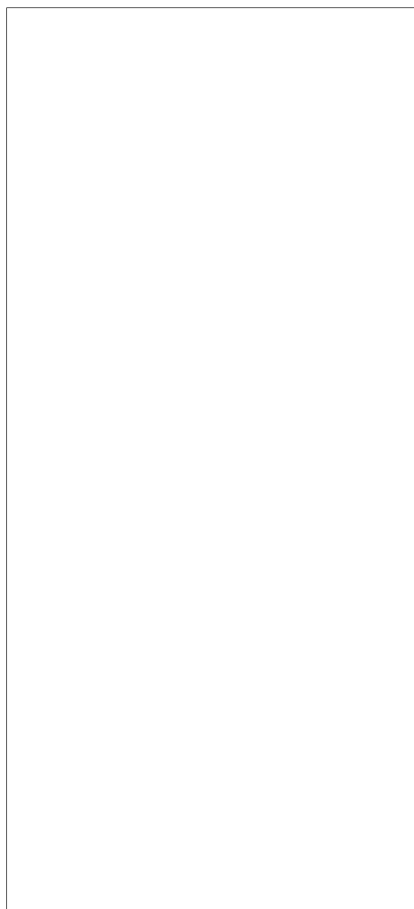
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Inside Attendees



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Laura Morgan, AFIS/INIS, (Rm3A252, Pentagon)

[redacted] NSA, (G5 3A170, HQ Bldg, Ft. Meade AFB)

[redacted], DIA/DB-4E, DIAC, (Rm. C4866, Bolling AFB)

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